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Counseling Services' Contribution Toward Academic Success in a Community College

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COUNSELING SERVICES' CONTRIBUTION TOWARD ACADEMIC

SUCCESS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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DEDICATION

To my daughters, Tera and Lauren:

For all your love, support, and encouragement

throughout my college education. You both

provided me with the inspiration and dedication

needed to keep me going from beginning to end.

Congratulations to you both. We are a great team

and we did it! Thank you.

And to Steve:

For your encouragement and faith in me. For your

support when stress levels were at their highest

and I needed you to carry me.

Thank you for being there.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this survey was to determine if graduates believed that the counseling services they received at Belleville Area College contributed to their academic success. A survey was conducted utilizing 181 graduates (111 females and 70 males) from a May 1996 graduate class of 696 students. Academic success is defined as the completion of a degree. Reasons for seeking counseling were broken into two time frames consisting of new students and students who were nearing completion of their degree. Areas of counseling explored included adjustment to college, choosing a major, personal, study skills, meeting graduation requirements and other. Results indicated that neither the gender of the student nor the ethnicity of the student related to the students' negative or positive beliefs that counseling services contributed to their academic success. Seventy-five percent of the sample stated that they believed the counseling services they received did contribute to their academic success.

INTRODUCTION

The student withdrawal rate from colleges in the United States has long been recognized as a significant social, economic, and educational problem. Efforts have been made to curb attrition by various colleges and universities through programs, experiments, and research (Astin, 1978). The problem of retention, particularly in developmental education programs, concerns most college administrators and faculties (Beal & Noel, 1980). As Astin, Korn, and Green note, student retention and satisfaction with the college experience have become urgent complex issues for campus officials (1987).

Nowhere has this renewed interest in student persistence been more prevalent than in community colleges (El-Khawas, 1986a). El-Khawas's report indicates an interest among administrators in keeping students in school for cost-effective purposes. Even more important is the reportedly stronger commitment to retain students because it is in the students' interest (Astin, 1975, 1987;

Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Bean & Metzner, 1985,
1987; Scholossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989).

Bishop (1990) states that institutions of
higher education have become more concerned about
the career development needs of students and the
overall importance of retention programs. These
issues have developed in an era when the financial
resources available to many counseling centers
have remained limited or are shrinking, making the
administration of such units even more
challenging. As colleges are increasingly caught
in the conflicts created by rising costs and
falling revenues, new priorities are being set.
College counseling centers have been urged to
evaluate their work carefully, develop updated
agendas, and plan strategically for the future
(Bishop, 1990; Stone & Archer, 1990).

Concerns about the relevance and future of
school counseling still demand attention. Schools
and the educational process have come under close
scrutiny by parents, legislators, educators and
the students themselves. Education has been

undergoing an era of reform and accountability. When school counseling programs have lacked evidence that their services were needed or were not of high quality, teachers and administrators have removed their support, and they have been the first programs to be eliminated when there were budget cutbacks and reforms (Bishop, 1990; Stone & Archer, 1990).

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine whether counseling services which are offered through the counseling department at Belleville Area College have any negative or positive impact in relationship to student persistence and academic success.

In order to address the issue of the present study, four null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no relationship between various degree programs and the number of counseling contacts.

2. There is no relationship between gender and counseling services' contribution toward academic success as expressed by the students.

3. There is no relationship between race and counseling services' contribution to academic success as expressed by the students.

4. There is no relationship between the number of counseling contacts and counseling services' contribution to academic success.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

History

Historically, counseling has played a major role in the success of the community and junior college movement. Leonard Coos (1929) was one of the first writers to outline the importance of counseling in junior colleges. Coos believed that the counseling functions of career guidance, personal counseling, and attention to student programming were crucial elements for student success.

The first school guidance programs appeared in the late 1800's and were closely connected to vocational education (e.g., Baker, 1992; Schmidt, 1993; Wittmer, 1993). Early programs were directive in nature and involved the provision of guidance classes to promote character development, teach socially appropriate behaviors, and assist with vocational planning. The single factor most responsible for the rapid growth of counseling centers in higher education was the necessity to

assist veterans who were returning from WWII (Embree, 1950, Gaudet, 1949).

According to Baker (1992), Schmidt (1993), and Wittmer (1993), review of the historical development of the specialty indicate that the scope and focus of school counseling programs changed over time: from vocational and educational decision making, to personal growth, to responsive services for special "at-risk" populations to developmental programs available for all students. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of campus counseling services and the multiplicity of functions that are performed. Guidelines for university and college counseling services were first developed in 1970 by a special task force of counseling center directors, chaired by Barbara Kirk (Kirk, B.F., Johnson, R., Redfield, J., Roston, R., & Warman, R. 1971). Its work originated from an earlier draft developed by a committee of the Canadian University Counseling Association, chaired by Robert I. Hudson. Guidelines were extensively revised in 1981 by a committee of the University and College Counseling

Centers Board of Accreditation of the
International Association of Counseling Services,
Inc, chaired by Kenneth F. Garnie (Garnie, K.,
Prosser-Gelwick, B., Lamb, D., McKinley, D.,
Schoenberg, B.M., Simono, R.B., Smith, J.,
Wierson, P., & Wrenn, R. (1982). The revisions
reflected the evolving role, functions, and
changes in the professional practices of
university and college counseling services in the
preceding decade. The current revision marks a
change from providing accreditation guidelines to
the establishment of standards for accreditation.
It also updates professional practice changes that
have taken place in counseling centers in recent
years.

The Role of Counseling Centers Today

Mustaine (1996) states that the counselor
holds a unique position in the school as they are
neither teachers nor administrators.
Consequently, their role is frequently
misunderstood, misinterpreted, or both.
Counseling must establish itself as a needed

educational service and counselors must be
perceived as a crucial element in the educational
process if they are to survive as a profession and
succeed in their mission with students.

The need for colleges and universities
counseling others to deal with important national
trends is well documented. Stone and Archer
(1990) pointed to the increase in student
diversity: the attention focused on the
psychological, health, safety, and financial needs
of students; and the overall national competition
for resources. Bishop (1990) added that
institutions of higher education have become more
concerned about the increased pathology in the
student population, the management of crises on
campus, the career development needs of students,
and the overall importance of retention programs.

Internally, institutions are learning to
adapt to an increasingly diverse student
population. Counselors and counseling programs
are challenged to respond to increases in
enrollment of multicultural student, older
"nontraditional" students, students with

disabilities and others. In addition, student problems and issues reflect societal issues, which are increasingly complex. College counselors are faced with increasing student therapeutic needs resulting from issues such as eating disorder, substance abuse, sexual abuse and violence, dysfunctional family experiences, and AIDS (Stone & Archer, 1990). At the same time, counseling services still strive to do the preventative, developmental work, which is the particular legacy of the vocational counseling and student personnel models.

Kaplan and Geoffroy (1990) suggest that school climate is the primary function of the guidance department and list goals for school counselors, which include making opportunities for student self-exploration, respecting student and teacher self-esteem, developing open and effective communication and valuing prevention rather than remediation. Thomas (1989) recommends that counselors expressing affection for students, promoting teamwork among staff, initiating a recognition program for staff and students and

promoting ethical practices achieve the same end.
Teaching guidance in areas such as self-image,
interpersonal relations and decision-making can
help students to grow personally (Carroll, 1981;
Dobson & Dobson, 1985). Finally, counselors can
serve as curricular consultants to help curricula
enhance self esteem, values and personal
development (Carroll, 1981).

College Students Needs

Current research reports indicate that the
needs for career planning and placement assistance
among college students have become extremely
comprehensive and intense (Astin, Korn, & Riggs,
1993). Students continue to report that a primary
purpose for attending college is to prepare for a
career but that they need professional help to do
so (Astin et al, 1993; Weissberg, Berensten, Cote,
Carvey, & Health, 1982).

Research has shown that the majority of
college students, especially freshmen and
sophomores, often lack the knowledge and
experience required to make a planned decision
concerning their choice of major and career

direction (Kelly & White, 1993; Tiller & Hutchins, 1979). Most college students have not been exposed to a range and a variety of career options before choosing an academic major or a career direction. Students simply choose from the majors or career that are most familiar. Students frequently do not understand that an academic major is a proxy for an occupation or career path. Students often have not learned that such choices of academic majors have clear connections to the subsequent career option available to them. In addition, the majority of college students, especially freshmen and sophomores, do not possess adequate levels of the self-understanding or career awareness needed to make educated career decisions (Moore, 1976; Rayman, 1993).

Research continues to provide convincing evidence that community college students are still very much in need of counseling. Many of today's community college students experience more significant personal problems and lower self-esteem than past student populations (Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Cross, 1983; Vaughan, 1983). Astin

(1989) noted that "although still a minority, the proportion of new students who feel depressed and who feel overwhelmed has risen in recent years. In addition, the proportion who consider themselves above average in emotional health has slipped" (p. A32).

College Needs And Concerns

It has become commonplace to state that America's colleges and universities are going through a period of fundamental change. Keller identified a number of factors that have come into play in the governance of higher education, including new financial realities, changing student demographics, interinstitutional competitions, needed technologies, and external regulatory controls. As these changes in higher education occur, the administration and management of student affairs programs have grown increasingly complex, and those who are in charge of such units are being confronted with some new challenges and problems. College and university counseling centers, in particular, have been urged

to evaluate their work carefully, develop updated agendas, and plan strategically for the future.

Retaining students is a significant issue facing most institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges. Public community colleges enroll approximately 51% of all students entering higher education in the United States (Cohen and Brawer, 1987; Karabel & Brint, 1989; Roueche & Baker, 1987) and more academically underprepared students than other types of institutions. More than half of all entering community college students lack the basic skills required to do credible college-level academic work (McCabe, 1981). In urban community colleges, the numbers are reported to range from three-fourths to more than 95% of the student body (Richardson, 1990). These students are most likely to drop out of college (Astin, 1975; Maxwell, 1980), resulting in losses to their communities, to their nation, and to themselves.

Counseling centers, both large and small, have been wrestling with some issues, such as waiting lists and financial constraints for a long

time but never with as much urgency as now. As
institutions of higher education are increasingly
caught in the conflicts created by rising costs
and falling revenues, new priorities are being set
(Bishop, 1995).

School counselors also are affected by state
and federal legislation about, and funding for,
the provision of counseling services in the
schools. Some legislation, however, has adverse
effects sometimes negatively redefining the school
counselor's role. In recent years, for example,
part-time employees have been hired with federal
funds for specialized counseling work (e.g.,
dropout prevention, substance abuse). School
counselors often have pleaded that the additional
funds be used to hire another school counselor so
that student-counselor ratios could be lowered and
school counselors would have more time to attend
to the special needs highlighted by the funding
sources. Usually, these pleas have been to little
avail, and school counselors have watched part-
time employees provide direct counseling services
that they themselves are trained to provide and

would like to offer. This situation is particularly troublesome when the part-time employee is not qualified. In addition, funding specifications too often have included narrow definitions (e.g., financial brackets, personal characteristic) of who may be served by the part-time employees. As a result, some students are "ineligible" to receive the services they need (Herr, 1984; Perry & Schwallie-Giddis, 1993).

Once the seemingly endless supply of new students began to level off in the 1980's, community college administrators who had been hired largely to manage new construction and to recruit faculty found themselves in unknown territory: falling enrollments and rising numbers of students who failed to persist toward completion of a degree. For years, those students who departed without reaching their goals went unnoticed because empty seats were filled promptly with next semester's crop of willing replacements. Departure rates exceeding 50 percent semester after semester were not unusual in large, urban community colleges (Coad & Alfers, 1991;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As a business losing customers, most colleges in the 1990's quickly responded by making student success and retention a top priority.

Student Retention

Numerous studies have been conducted that show the negative effect of career uncertainty (Brown & Strange, 1981; Hartman & Fuqua, 1983; Plaud, Baker & Groccia, 1990; Titley & Titley, 1980; Upcraft, Gardner, & Associated, 1989). For example the degree of uncertainty about career goals has been linked to attrition (Newton & Gaither, 1980; Titley & Titley, 1980) and to negative effects on academic achievement and academic adjustment (Plaude et al., 1990).

The student withdrawal rate from colleges in the United States has long been recognized as a significant social, economic, and educational problem. Efforts have been made to curb attrition by various colleges and universities through programs, experiments, and research (Astin, 1978). The problem of retention, particularly in

developmental education programs, concerns most college administrators and faculties. Student retention and satisfaction with the college experience have become urgent, complex issues for campus officials (Beal & Noel, 1980).

Nowhere has this renewed interest in student persistence been more prevalent than in community colleges. El-Khawas (1986a) reported that 85% of the community colleges surveyed in 1985 had programs for monitoring student retention, compared to 64% in 1984. El-Khawas's report clearly indicates an interest among administrators in keeping students in school for cost-effective purposes. Even more important is the reportedly stronger commitment to retain students because it is in the students' interest.

The existing research on student retention has not been accepted without criticism. The failure to use theoretical models to explain the withdrawal process, the use of univariate or bivariate statistical procedures, and the use of ex post facto research designs have been major

criticisms of earlier student retention research
(Lea, Sedlacek, & Stewart, 1979). Kohen, Nestel &
Carmas, (1978) suggest that failure to view
college students' success as a sequential process
places severe limitations on the usefulness of
retention research.

The results of many of these studies indicate
that retention is a complex issue that seldom has
a single cause but involves the interaction of
different variables (Astin, 1975; Cope & Hammel,
1975; Lenning, Beal & Sauer, 1980; Tinto, 1975,
1981). Recognized variables include factors
related to student characteristics and student
institutional interaction, academic aptitude and
performance, level of aspiration and motivation,
institutional type, image, student services
offered, and student involvement -- plus the
development of a sense of belonging or degree of
fit that results from student and institution
interactions (Beal & Noel, 1980; Lenning, Beal &
Sauer, 1980). Retention, student satisfaction,
and student success appear to improve when

retention efforts are geared toward integrating the student's total educational experience.

Guidance is one way to fulfill students' needs as well as a necessary element to ensure retention or completion of transfer (Cohen & Brawer, 1982, pp.187-188; Cohen & Brawer, 1987, pp. 164-168; Creamer, 1980, p. 12; Donna, Schaier-Peleg, & Forer, 1987, pp.37-43; Medsker & Tillery, 1971, pp.62-65; Palmer, 1987, pp.56-60). As costs mount, however, community colleges may have to eliminate or reduce funds for guidance and counseling services. As Matson and Deggan (1985, pp. 131-132) point out, often the counseling function of student services is one of the first programs to be eliminated when funding is limited.

It is possible, however, for a counseling center to demonstrate that some of its activities do relate to the revenue-generating side of institutions. Data illustrating that counseling plays a role in retention efforts are obviously important in calculating the cost to a college or university when a student leaves voluntarily. Evidence exists that a high percentage of students

who are self-defined retention risks and who use counseling services in their decision-making process tend to remain enrolled in school (Bishop & Brennerman, 1986) and often are able to identify what effect counseling had on their decision making (Bishop & Walker, 1990).

Bishop and Walker (1990) note that although institutions of higher education often focus on accountability procedures and cost-benefit ratios, administrators and decision makers also discuss commitments to certain values that exist in educational communities. For example, the idea that risks need to be carefully managed and that prevention is preferable to remediation is still a factor in institutional decision making. For institutions that are fighting to maintain enrollments in competition with other schools, there should be time allocated to the discussion of (a) how counseling services may be one of the strongest retention tools, (b) parents' continuing concern about the overall health and safety of their children, and (c) how the image of an institution can be marred by a few crises that are

not managed well. Overall cost-analysis procedures attempt to be objective, whereas values-oriented discussions tend to be more subjective and may not lead to the same conclusions (Bishop & Walker, 1990).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Belleville Area College

The counseling center evaluated for this study is located at Belleville Area College in Belleville, Illinois. There were 696 students who graduated in May of 1996 with either an Associate of Arts degree, an Associate of Science degree or an Associate of Applied Science degree. Out of the 696 students who graduated, 586 of them used the counseling center at least one time.

The counseling center at Belleville Area College offers personal, academic, and career counseling to the students. The services are free of charge. There are a total of 7 full time counselors and 28 part time counselors. The majority of the students are seen on a walk-in basis; however, appointments are welcome.

Subjects

Out of the 696 graduates, there were 352 of the students who used the counseling center 3 or more times. Out of these 352 graduates, a total of 181 students were contacted by telephone.

Attempts were made to contact the remaining 171 students; however, they were not available. Some students had moved and their locations were unknown. There were a total of 111(62%) female students and 70(38%) male students who participated in this study. One hundred and fifty-eight students identified themselves as Caucasian. Because of the small representation of African-American students (12) and all other students (13), the two categories were combined under the category of other.

Instrument

The questionnaire utilized for this study was developed by counselors at Belleville Area College. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the effectiveness of the counseling services received as well as whether the services contributed to academic success (see Appendix B). Previous data collected by the counseling department provided the information concerning the number of counseling contacts per student. Additional data which had been previously collected included gender, degree and race of each

student. Students were not aware that the surveyor had the information concerning how many contacts each student had with the counseling center. Only the students who had contact with the counseling center 3 or more times were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in this telephone survey.

The first section of the survey inquired about the type of counseling services used during the student's beginning semesters at BAC. The student was asked to identify if counseling services assisted with adjustment with college, choosing a major or career, personal problems, study skills or other. The second section of the survey inquired about the type of counseling services used as the student moved closer to graduation. The third section focused on whether the students felt the services received from the counseling center contributed in any way to their academic success. The last section of the survey offered the student the opportunity to express any opinions concerning services that were unavailable which may have been more helpful.

Procedure

For this survey students were selected from the May 1996 graduate class who had 3 or more counseling contacts at Belleville Area College. A sample of the students was contacted by telephone and the purpose of the survey was explained. In addition, it was explained to the students that the information was confidential and that the students' participation was optional.

Data Analysis

Four separate chi-square analyses were performed using race and gender as the two independent, binomial variables while the dependent variables were the number of counseling contacts, degree program and whether counseling services contributed to academic success. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the reasons for seeking counseling during both the first semesters and the latter semesters.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was designed to evaluate the use and satisfaction with the campus counseling center at Belleville Area College. It focused on the 696 students who graduated with an Associate degree in May 1996. Of those 696 students, 226 (32.5%) received an Associate of Arts degree, 174 (25%) received an Associate of Science degree and 296 (42.5%) received an Associate of Applied Science degree. Of the total 696 students, 586 (84%) used the counseling center at least one time during their enrollment at Belleville Area College. The breakdown by number of counseling contacts appears in Table 1.

TABLE 1

**Number of Counseling Contacts During Enrollment at
Belleville Area College**

Number of Contacts	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
0	110	16%
1	132	19%
2	102	15%
3	80	11%
4	82	12%
5	70	10%
6	41	6%
7	25	4%
8	20	3%
9	11	2%
10	10	2%
More than 10	10	1%

Looking at the use of the counseling center
by the number of students graduating with
Associate of Art, Science and Applied Science one
notes that 141 (62%) of the Associate of Arts
students used the counseling center three or more
times. At the same time, 121 (69.5%) of the
Associate of Science graduates used it 3 or more
times, while 90 (30%) of the Associate of Applied
Science graduates used it that number of times.

A chi-square analysis of the different groups
use of the counseling center is shown in Table 2.

The calculated chi-square value of 97.29 (4

df,alph = .05) exceeds the critical value of 9.49,

leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis of

independence. A relationship exists between the

various degree programs and the number of visits

to the counseling center. The phi statistic, when

computed, showed a correlation of .374.

TABLE 2

**Chi-Square: Degree Program and Number of
Counseling Contacts**

Count Expected Value Row% Column% Total%	Number of Counseling Contacts			
	0-2	3-5	6 or More	Row Total
Associate of Arts	85 111.7 38% 25% 12%	79 75.3 35% 34% 11%	62 39 27% 52% 9%	226
Associate of Science	53 86 30% 15% 8%	84 58 50% 38% 13%	30 30 20% 28% 5%	174
Associate of Applied Science	60 146.3% 70% 60% 30%	66 98.7 22% 28% 9%	24 51 8% 20% 3%	296
Column Totals	344	232	120	696

chi square	degrees of freedom	alpha	critical value	% of Cells <5
97.29	4	.05	9.49	N/A

All together, 352 (50.5%) of these students used the counseling center 3 or more times. The sample surveyed (N=181) was selected from this group of 352 students based on availability.

Of the 181 student sample 111 (61%) were female students and 70 (39%) were male students: 158 (87%) of the participants were Caucasian, 10 (6%) were African American and 13 (7%) represented other races. One hundred twenty-five of the students (69%) had between 3 and 5 counseling contacts while 56 (31%) had 6 or more counseling contacts. When asked the reason(s) for seeking counseling the following responses were noted (Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 3

Reasons for Seeking Counseling During First Semesters

Adjustment to College	Choosing Major	Personal	Study Skills	Other
44(88%)	16(32%)	5(10%)	7(14%)	15(30%)

TABLE 4

Reasons for Seeking Counseling During Later Semesters

Meeting Graduation Req.	Choosing Major	Personal	Study Skills	Other
155(86%)	81(45%)	15(8%)	42(23%)	30(17%)

In terms of whether the student felt that the counseling services received contributed to academic success, 136 (75%) of those students sampled stated that the counseling services did contribute to success, while 45 (25%) stated that services received did not contribute to academic success. Three chi-square analyses were performed to test the relationship between counseling services' contribution toward success and gender, counseling services' contriubtion toward success and race, and counseling services' contribution toward success and number of counseling contacts.

Gender and Counseling Services' Contribution Toward Academic Success

Table 5 shows the results of a chi-square analysis using the variables gender and counseling services' contribution toward success. Of the 136 students who expressed that services received did contribute to academic success, 84 (62%) were female and 52 (38%) were male. Of the 45 who stated that the counseling services they received did not contribute to academic success, 27 (60%) were female and 18 (40%) were male.

The calculated chi-square value for this distribution was 0.044. Given an alpha level of .05 and one degree of freedom, the critical value for this analysis was 3.84. As the calculated chi-square value of 0.044 did not exceed this critical value, the null hypothesis of independence is retained.

TABLE 5

**Chi-Square: Gender and Counseling Services'
Contribution Toward Success**

Count Expected Value Row % Column% Total Percentage	Counseling Contributed Toward Success?		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Female	84 83.40 75.68% 61.76% 46.41%	27 27.60 24.32% 60% 14.92%	111
Male	52 52.60 74.29% 38.24% 28.73%	18 17.40 25.71% 40% 9.94%	70
Column Totals	136	45	181

Chi Square Value	degrees of freedom	alpha	critical value	%cells<5
0.044	1	.05	3.84	0%

Race and Counseling Services' Contribution Toward
Academic Success

Of the 158 Caucasian students sampled, 118
(74.68%) stated that counseling services received
did contribute to academic success while 40
(25.32%) stated the counseling services received
did not contribute to success. Eight (80%) of the
African American students stated that counseling
services received did not contribute to academic
success, while two (20%) stated the counseling
services received did not contriubte to success.
Of the 13 students of other races, 10 (76.92%)
said they found that counseling services received
did contribute to academic success while 3
(23.08%) stated the counseling services received
did not contribute to success. A chi-square
analysis was performed to assess the relationship
between race and counseling services' contribution
toward academic success. Because 2 of the 6 cells
would contain expected values of less than 5, the
cells were collapsed, with African-American and
Other races being combined under the category
Other Races. The results are shown in Table 6
below.

TABLE 6

**Chi-Square: Race and Counseling Services'
Contribution Toward Academic Success**

Count Expected Value Row% Column% Total%	Counseling Contributed to Success?		
	Yes	No	Row Totals
Caucasian	118 118.72 75% 87% 65%	40 39.28 25% 89% 22%	158
Other Races	18 17.28 78% 13% 10%	5 5.72 22% 11% 3%	23
Column Totals	136	45	181

chi-square value	degrees of freedom	alpha	critical value	%cells<5
0.137	1	.05	3.84	0%

The critical value for this analysis (alpha = 1) was 3.84 while the calculated chi-square statistic was .137. As the calculated value is less than the critical value the null hypothesis of independence is retained.

Number of Counseling Contacts and Counseling Services' Contribution to Academic Success

Of the 125 students who visited the counseling center between 3 and 5 times, 88 (70%) stated that counseling services received did contribute to academic success, while 37 (33%) stated that the counseling services received did not contribute to academic success. Fifty-six students visited the counseling center 6 or more times. Of those students, 49 (87.5%) said the counseling services received did contribute to academic success, while 7 (12.5%) said counseling services received did not contribute to academic success. A chi-square analysis was performed to assess the independence of the variable Number of Counseling Contacts and Counseling Services' Contribution (Table 7).

TABLE 7

Chi-Square: Counseling Contacts and Counseling Services' Contribution Toward Success

```
Count
Expected Value
Row%
Column%
Total%                        Yes          No         Row Total

3-5 Counseling Contacts       88           37          125
                              94.61        30.39
                              70%          30%
                              64%          84%
                              49%          20%

6 or more                     49           7           56
                              42.39        13.61
                              87.5%        12.5%
                              36%          16%
                              27%          4%


Column Total                  137          44          181
```

chi-square value	degrees of freedom	alpha	critical value	phi
6.14	1	.05	3.84	.184

The calculated chi-square value of 6.14 is greater than the critical value of 3.84 (Alpha = .05, df = 1). Therefore the null hypothesis of independence is rejected and the researcher can conclude that a relationship exists between the number of counseling contacts and counseling services' contribution toward academic success. Once a

relationship is established between two variables, the phi coefficient can be used to measure the strength of association (Huck & Cormier, 1996). Using the formula for phi, which is the square root of chi-squared over N, the calculated phi coefficient for this data is .184.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

For this study, the null hypothesis stated there is no relationship between the various degree programs and the number of visits to the counseling center. The results of this study suggest that a relationship does exist between various academic degrees of Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science and the number of visits to the counseling center. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

It is important to note that the number of contacts by the graduates of the Associate of Applied Science degree may be skewed. This possibility results from the fact that this degree contains programs which are clearly defined as to which classes are needed. There are few choices to be made concerning academic counseling therefore, it is likely that these students do not need to seek academic counseling. In addition, the students have frequent contact with the

director of each program who typically provides guidance as needed for the appropriate program. There are also liason personnel in several of the Applied Science programs, who have specialties in those vocational programs, and who assist students.

The null hypothesis which stated that there is not a relationship between gender and counseling services' received contributing toward success is retained. Although there was a larger percent of females than males who participated in the study, the difference was not significant enough to skew the findings.

Also tested was the null hypothesis that there is not a relationship between race and counseling services' received contributing toward academic success. The findings of the study suggest that the race of an individual is not related to whether the student believes that counseling services received contributed to academic success. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The categories of adjustment to college (88%) and meeting graduation requirements(86%) were utilized approximately the same amount. This is reasonable considering that both of these categories are part of the education process even though they are at apposite ends of the spectrum. Both categories assist the student in meeting goals needed for degree achievement.

The category of choosing a major increased from 32% (first semesters) to 45% (latter semesters). Many students begin college unsure of the final goal of their endeavors. It is probable that as students needs for declaration of a major increases, the student then seeks assistance from the counseling center. The need for choosing a major becomes more pressing if the student plans to transfer to a university.

The null hypothesis stated there is no relationship between the number of counseling contacts and counseling services' contribution to academic success. The results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between the

number of counseling contacts and counseling services' contribution to academic success. The data suggests that the more frequently a student visits the counseling center, the higher the probability that the counseling services' received will contribute to academic success.

Academic success suggests retention of the student. Bishop (1995) notes that retention of the student is a priority when dealing with financial constraints within the institution of education. Results of this study suggest that the counseling services provided at Belleville Area College contribute to the retention of the student, thereby contributing to the financial stability of the college.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the present study was the small representation of "Other" in the sample. The results may have a reduced variability due to this small sample of "Other". Future researchers may want to include a more balanced sample of races so that it may be more likely to predict

whether counseling needs are being met for all races.

Another limitation is the means by which the sample was collected. A randomized, larger, racially and gender mixed study would be more useful in predicting the numbers of males versus females or race versus race who seek counseling services.

Recommendations for Further Studies

A more extensive study of the counseling center's services needs to be conducted, focusing on the different gender and ethnic group needs of Belleville Area College's students.

In addition, research which includes an age variance would be helpful in determining varying needs based on age.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT FOLLOWED FOR TELEPHONE SURVEY

Hello, my name is Darlene Jones. I'm a counselor with the Belleville Area College counseling center. We're conducting a survey of the May 1996 BAC graduates. The purpose of this survey is to assess the effectiveness of the counseling services we offer as well as any suggestions or comments you might have concerning these services. We are asking those students who had contact with the counseling center to give us feedback on their experience.

Let me say that this information will be held in the strictest confidence. We are gathering information only and this information will not be connected to you personally in any way.

I have just a few yes or no questions. Would you be willing to give me 5 minutes or less of your time? Thank you.

1. Think back to your very first semesters at BAC. As a new student, did counseling services assist you with the following:
   a) Adjustment with College - yes/no
   b) Choosing a major or career - yes/no
   c) Personal or family problems or stress related issues - yes/no
   d) Study skills - yes/no
   e) Other - yes/no

2. As you moved closer to graduation, did counseling services assist you with the following:
   a) Meeting requirements for graduation
   b) Choosing a major or career
   c) Personal or family problems or stress related issues
   d) Study Skills
   e) Other

3. You've completed your degree, so obviously you've been academically successful. Did the counseling services you received contribute in some way to your academic success?

If no, are there any counseling services that
you believe could have been more helpful to
you?

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